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VAMPIRELLA

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ART. JOSE GONZALEZ



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Chaos is back! And VAMPI and Adam Van Helsing, zombies, monstrous diodes and Count Dracula himself! The concept of the beautiful and deadly also is included!

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VAMPIRELLA

CONTENTS

ISSUE NO. 55
OCTOBER 1976

4

RETURN OF PAPA VOUDOU

With Pendragon and a desperate Adam Van Helsing, VAMPIRELLA jets to a Caribbean nightmare island. There they must free Adam's father, Conrad, from a tangle of politics and hatred. Fight a hideous undead corpse. And defy the followers of the incredible evil, mad god...Chaos!

24

AND BE A BRIDE OF CHAOS

The magnificent illusionist, Pendragon, and his assistant, VAMPIRELLA, are off to the Carnic Alps, to give a private, command performance. They face jealousy, deceit and death when they meet their host, a starlost refugee from VAMPI's planet, Dracula, and the mad god he now serves!

43

THE MISSING MIND

VAMPI and Pendragon fly a jagged orbit of entangling mystery and sinister deception. Drawn into the search for the missing ingredients of an incomplete corpse, they are trapped in a macabre wonderland. There, multibillionaire, Henderson Hunt, is dead. But, strangely enough, the hunt is just beginning!

51

THE LURKER IN THE DEEP

Fleeing the deadly stake of Conrad Van Helsing, VAMPIRELLA runs into the arms of handsome millionaire, Johnny Triton. But Triton has a surprise for the beautiful alien. One that spells danger for Pendragon and death for many people. An evil god lurking in the sea... Demogorgan!

65

BRANCATELLI: COMICBOOKS

Joe Brancatelli is a man with a lot of opinions. It is his fear that even the most perfect of comics might not survive. Why? "The key to comic book's survival lies in the effective utilization of the notoriously poor distribution network," he writes. But this isn't happening!

PROLOGUE: IN THE CARIBBEAN REPUBLIC OF *CÔTE DE SOLER*, IT IS NIGHT, NOT A NIGHT OF SOFT SHADOW AND QUIET, ISLAMBING STARS, BUT OF BURSTING FIREWORKS AND RAUCOUS LAUGHTER, AND CROWDS GOING HEERILY MAD IN THE STREETS. IT IS *CARNIVAL*, A TIME IN THE CAPITAL CITY, A TIME WHEN STRANGERS MEET AND TRAVELLERS TROUD AND THREE SUCH TRAVELLERS WE SEE NOW: *ADAM VAN HELSING*, LAST IN A LINE OF EXPLORERS OF THE UNKNOWN, STALKERS OF THE UNSEEN; *PENDRAGON*, VALENTIAN AND SAGE, MAGICIAN AND TRICK, COMPANION, THE STRANGE, LOVELY GIRL FROM A DISTANT WORLD CALLED DRAGONLON...

VAMPIRELLA

ADAM! I WAS
HAPPY THAT SUFFY
BOAT COULD TAKE US
OFF JEAM AND
VIVIANE'S ISLAND.
BUT WHAT?

NOTHING
SOWSER FOR
A CHANGE. DON'T LET
THE WEIRD COSTUMES
FOOL YOU... IT'S JUST
AN ANNUAL
CELEBRATION!

I THINK I'LL APPRECIATE IT MORE FROM HERE. CELEBRATING ON DRAGONLON WAS USUALLY DONE IN **SMALLER** GROUPS!

THEY'RE **ENTITLED** TO SOME OVER-ENTHUSIASM THIS YEAR, VAMPIRELLA... A MAN WHO WAS VIRTUALLY **DICTATOR** OF CÔTE DE SOLÉIL DID A FEW MONTHS AGO.

BUT YOU'LL PROBABLY BE MORE INTERESTED IN LOCAL **CUSTOMS** THAN LOCAL **POLITICS**. LET'S SEE IF WE CAN FIND A QUIET SPOT TO OBSERVE THEM.

ADAM... THERE WERE FOOTFALLS BEHIND US. I THINK WE'RE BEING FOLLOWED.

WE'LL FIND OUT FOR CERTAIN... AROUND THE NEXT CORNER!

AN EXCELLENT NOTION, ADAM. MY BOY! PERHAPS A SMALL **BISTRO**... I'M ANXIOUS TO SEE IF THE OVER-ENTHUSIASM EXTENDS TO THE SIZE AND STRENGTH OF THEIR **LIBATIONS!**

NOW! WHY IS A FUGITIVE FROM **GRAY'S ANATOMY** HAUNTING US?

WAIT... **WAIT!** I AM A **FRIEND** ADAM VAN HELSING!

YOU *KNOW* ME? HOW—PAUL! *PAUL GARAUDI*! YOU WERE AN EXCHANGE STUDENT IN MY FATHER'S CLASS AT NEW ENGLAND UNIVERSITY!

BUT WHY NOT A SIMPLE HELLO INSTEAD OF THIS *CLAMOR AND CHASSER* BT?

I HAD TO BE *CERTAIN* NO ONE WAS AROUND... MY POLITICAL ACTIVITIES AGAINST THE SUPPORTERS OF OUR LATE PRESIDENT HAVE MADE ME A TARGET OF THE *SECRET POLICE*!

THEN YOU'RE COME TO US FOR *HELP* RIGHT?

NO, TO *WARR* YOU! YOUR *FATHER* RECENTLY CAME TO CÔTE DE SOUL... APPARENTLY OUT OF SOME BELIEF *YOU* WOULD SHOW UP HERE, I MET HIM BRIEFLY BY ACCIDENT...

ONCE THEY *HAVE* SOMEONE, NO FRIEND OR RELATIVE OF THAT PERSON IS *SAFE*! IF THEY LEARN YOU'RE HERE, THEY WILL BE *AFTER* YOU!

YESTERDAY THE *SECRET POLICE* *ARRESTED* HIM!

SUCH OMINOUS WORDS ARE DEBASTING *ENOUGH* TO A DEVOUT COWARD LIKE MYSELF... DOES THE *WIND* HAVE TO RISE ON CUE TO RAISE MY HACKLES AS WELL?

OUR PEOPLE CALL IT THE *VOUDOU WIND*... BECAUSE IT'S BLOWN RIGHTLY EVER SINCE THAT OLD TYRANT VALIER, DIED. BUT PERHAPS YOU DON'T *KNOW* OUR NICKNAME FOR PRESIDENT VALIER... *PAPA VOUDOU*!

THERE'S A *SOUND* ON THE WIND... I CAN HEAR IT *FAINTLY* SOME SORT OF... *MUSIC*!

YES, *ANGST*. TOO FAR AWAY AT FIRST TO BE CAUGHT BY ANY BUT THE SUPER-KEEN SENSES OF THE GIRL FROM ANOTHER WORLD. THEN, IT *GROWS!* THE THROBBING DRUMS, THE SHILLING FLUTES, THE WILD RHYTHMS OF DANCING FEET, MIXING, BUILDING TOWARD A HAUNTING, HORRIFYING CRESCENDO... *THE MUSIC OF VOUDOU!*



EACH MIDNIGHT, *MADAME DOMINIQUE* HAD DANCED, SHE HAD SLUNG THE ANCIENT CHANTS AND CALLED TO HER DEPARTED LOVER, *JACQUES PALIER*. SHE HAD EXERCISED ALL HER POWERS AS *BOCOR*-SORCERESS-- OF THE VOUDOU CLOT, AND NOW AT LAST THERE WAS A *STARRING*. NOW AT LAST THE BLACK MAGIC FORCES WERE CULMINATING IN...

THE RESURRECTION OF PAPA VOUDOU!



ANAN VANDUDDU! WHO FOR TWENTY YEARS COULDLY MANIPULATED AND SELFISHLY EXPLOITED THE THIRD LARGEST COUNTRY IN THE CARIBBEAN...

ANAN VANDUDDU! WHO MAINTAINED POWER THROUGH TERRORISM, BY HIS SECRET POLICE AND THE DARK CLUT FROM WHICH HIS KICKBOOTS CAME...

ANAN VANDUDDU! WHO LONG VOWED THAT HIS IRON GRASP ON THE THROAT OF CÔTE DE SOLÉIL WOULD NEVER BE BROKEN BY ANY FOE, ANY FORCE...



...NOT EVEN BY THE GRAVE!



SUCCESS,
COLONEL
RUMIN!



SPLINDID,
MADAME DOMINIQUE!
UNFORTUNATELY, I'M
NOT DOING SO WELL
WITH **DR. VAN
HELSING** HERE!





HE STILL **DENIES** THAT
BLASTED PAUL GERALD AND
HIM COMET BUT WHY **ELSE**
WOULD SUCH A RENOWNED
EXPERT ON THE
SUPERNATURAL
BE HERE READY TO
ATTEMPT TO **STOP** US?

OR DO
YOU **STICK**
WITH THAT STORY
ABOUT SEARCHING FOR
YOUR **SON**... TO SAVE
HIM FROM SOME
FEMALE **WITCHERY**?

I-IT WAS
THE **TRUTH**,
RAMAN...



STUBBORN, OH? WELL, SO AM I!
STUBBORN ENOUGH TO LEAVE THE
AMERICAN ARMY WHEN IT WENT **SORRY**!
STUBBORN ENOUGH TO SUCCEED AS
MILITARY ADVISOR TO A **REAL MAN**
LIKE PRESIDENT NALER!

AND STUBBORN ENOUGH NOT
TO LET A BUNCH OF COMES AND
RADICALS TEAR DOWN WHAT WE
BUILT: **KEEP WORKING ON**
HMM, BOYS!



NO ONE WILL EVER
ACCEPT HIM AGAIN LIKE
THAT! A-A ZOMBIE.
A PIECE OF ROTTING
FLESH! YOU CAN EVEN
SMELL --

THIS IS
ONLY THE **FIRST**
STEP, COLONEL...



N-NO...! I DON'T
THINK IT WOULD BE
THIS WAY!

JUST TO GET THIS FAR, I HAVE
EXPLOITED MY **FULL POWERS** AS
A PRIESTESS OF **WOLFDOWN**! TO
BRING HIM MORE THAN
LIFE, TO MAKE HIM MORE THAN
THE HINDLESS THING YOU SEE...



...WILL REQUIRE THE
STRONGEST
OF MAGICS!



THIS! THE
POWERS OF THE MAD
DOD **CHAOS**, WHO ALONG
WITH HIS SEVEN DEMON
SERVANTS, ONCE
RULED EARTH!

THE BOOK
SETS FORTH **SPILLS**
FOR CALLING TO HIM IN HIS
PLACE OF BANISHMENT --
THE **WINTER-WIND**!
IT IS **DANGEROUS**...
BUT WE MUST
RISK IT!

BUT...

YOU'VE BEEN AT
THIS FOR OVER AN
HOUR! NOW YOURSELF
STILL UNCHANGED! WHY
ISN'T THE JUNGLE-BOO
WORKING?

MAGIC IS
SOMEWHAT LESS PRECISE
THAN MILITARY TACTICS,
COCHNE! THE SPELLS I'VE
TRIED DO NOT SEEM
POWERFUL ENOUGH TO
EVOKE THE PROPER
RESPONSE!

THERE IS ONLY *ONE* LEFT
THAT MAY WORK, BUT I'D HOPED
TO *AVOID* IT... IT COULD PROVE
TOO POWERFUL! IF ONLY
SOMEONE *EQUALLY* SKILLED
IN THESE MATTERS WERE
ASSISTING ME...

THEN
IT MIGHT BE
SAFELY
EVOKED!

NO DOUBT CONRAD
VAN HELSING'S STUDIES
HAVE MADE *ANY*
QUALIFIED FOR SUCH A
CHALLENGE... BUT OF
COURSE, A MAN OF HIS
SCRUPLES COULD
NEVER BE MADE TO—

THE HELL HE CAN'T!
GIVE ME ENOUGH
TIME LADY, AND I'LL
FIND *SOME* WAY TO
BREAK THAT OLD MAN...
YOU GOT MY WORD AS
AN OFFICER, AND
GENTLEMAN!

THE LONG NIGHT WEARS ON, THE YODOU WHO
HAS DIED, THE CARNIVAL REVELERS HAVE LEFT THE
STREETS, ONLY THOSE WHO HAVE NOWHERE TO
GO REMAIN...

WE WERE
LUCKY TO FIND
A PLACE STILL OPEN,
PAUL, BUT ISN'T THIS
RISKY FOR YOU,
PAUL?

A MAN ON
THE RUN GETS
TIRED, ADAM... AND
LONELY, IT'S GOOD
TO SIT, TO TALK...
IF ONLY FOR A
FEW MOMENTS.

I'M NOT WELL KNOWN
IN THIS QUARTER, IT'S
DOUBTFUL I'D BE
RECOGNIZED.

BESIDES, YOUR
FATHER WAS PROBABLY
ARRESTED BECAUSE HE
WAS SEEN WITH ME. I
FEEL OBLIGATED
TO HELP...



BUT GOD KNOWS, THERE IS LITTLE THAT CAN BE DONE. BY NOW HE IS IMPRISONED IN THE ROYAL PALACE, BEING ENTERTAINED BY TAPA, YODOLU'S MISTRESS AND HIS MILITARY ADVISOR.

THERE IS NO ORDINARY WAY DR. VAN HULSTING COULD BE REACHED OR RESCUED?

KEEP...
KEEP 2

RASCAL SEEM'S TO HAVE VANISHED.
AH, WELL! NEVER LET IT BE SAID
PONDORAGON WAS TOO PROUD TO
SERVE HIMSELF!

VAMPIRELLA,
KNOWING THE WAY
DAD *Feels* ABOUT YOU,
THE WAY HE'S HOUNDED
AND HUNTED YOU, YOU'RE
STILL INTERESTED
IN HELPING HIM?

HE'LL NEVER BE
CONVINCED I'VE CHANGED
FROM THE CREATURE OF PREY
I USED TO BE IF I DON'T
BUT IF I CAN FIND HIM HIM
IN THE ROYAL PALACE...

BUT DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND? THAT PLACE IS A **FORTRESS**. HOW CAN A MERE GIRL HOPE TO --

BUT PAUL GRAAD KNOWS NOTHING OF THE POWERS OF THOSE
BASED ON DISTANT DRAGON. HE DOES NOT SEE WHAT
HAPPENS TO THIS 'MERG GIRL' AS SHE STEPS INTO THE
SHADOWS OUTSIDE...

AND MORE UNFORTUNATELY, ~~MONOPOLIA~~ DOES NOT SEE THE DARK SEDAN THAT COMES SCREECHING TO A HALT IN FRONT OF THE BISTRO ONLY MINUTES AFTER SHE WINGS HER WAY TOWARD THE ROYAL PALACE!

ADMIN...
THE SECRET
POLICE!

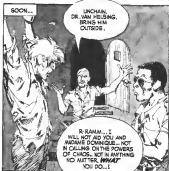


THEY'RE BOTH STILL **BREATHING!** ANOTHER BURST!

ONE MOMENT, LET ME CHECK THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE ONE WITH GRAIDS. IT WILL LOOK MORE PROPER IN OUR REPORT IF WE HAVE A NAME.

VAN HELSING...! IT IS **FAMILIAR...**

THE **OLD MAN** COL. RAMM HAS BEEN INTERROGATING! HE WILL BE **INTERESTED** IN THIS...



SOON...

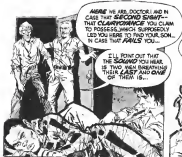
UNCHAIN, DR. VAN HELSING, BRING HIM OUTSIDE.

R-RAMM... I WILL NOT AID YOU AND WADSWORTH DOMINIQUE... NOT IN CALLING ON THE POWERS OF CHAOS... NOT IN ANYTHING NO MATTER, **WHAT?** YOU DO...!



YES, YES, I **KNOW** HOW STUBBORN, HOW UNBREAKABLE, YOU ARE, DEAR DOCTOR... I JUST HAVE A LITTLE SOMETHING TO **SHOW** YOU...

I AM BLIND, RAMM... THERE IS **ANYTHING** YOU CAN SHOW ME.



HERE WE ARE, DOCTOR! AND IN CASE THAT **SECOND SIGHT**-- THAT **CLARIFICATION** YOU CLAIM TO POSSESS, WHICH SUPPOSEDLY LED YOU HERE TO FIND YOUR SON... IN CASE THAT **RAVES** YOU...

I'LL POINT OUT THAT THE **SECOND** YOU HEAR IS TWO MEN BRAGGING THEIR **LAST** AND **ONE** OF THEM IS...

ADAM!



OF COURSE, WITH A **TRANSFUSION** AND IMMEDIATE TREATMENT, HE **COULD** BE SAVED. IN FACT, THERE IS A DOCTOR STANDING BY UPSTAIRS...



...ALL YOU HAVE TO **DO** IS ASK TO ASSIST MADAME DOMINGUE HERE IN EVOKING THE POWERS OF CHAOS TO RESTORE FULL LIFE TO PRESIDENT VUJERU!

A SIMPLE YES SAVES YOUR SON AND BRINGS A **GREAT MANY** BACK TO HIS PEOPLE!



NO! IT'S **ABHORRIBLE**... A **SECOND** LIFE FOR A TYRANT AND MURDERER! I WON'T, I-- I--



I-- I CAN'T LET MY OWN SON **DIE**! LORD FORGIVE ME... I CAN'T!



I **KNEW** YOU WERE A REASONABLE MAN, VAN HELSING! ALL RIGHT, MEN... GET THE BOY UPSTAIRS, **ON THE DOUBLE!**

THE OTHER PERSON **WITH** ADAM... HE'S HURT ALSO! YOU MUST HELP HIM AS WELL!



YOUR FORMER STUDENT, **PAUL GRAY**? HE WASN'T PART OF THE **BORGAIN** DOCTOR! AND IN ANY CASE, I FEAR, IT'S **TOO LATE**...

IT WAS TOO LATE. THE VERY **MOMENT** HE DECIDED TO OPPOSE MADAME DOMINGUE AND ME!

DEATH COMES IN TIME FOR EVERY MAN. NONE TRULY ESCAPE, BUT GIVEN THE STRENGTH OF WILL, THE SOURCE OF DETERMINATION, SOME FOR A WHILE **WILL RESIST**. SO, PAUL GERALD DREAMS OF HIS **HATED** FOR WHAT A DICTATOR DID TO HIS PEOPLE, HIS **RAGE** AGAINST THE RUIN SCHEMES OF THE MAN'S FOLLOWERS... AND CLINGS TO **LIFE**.





WHAT?
HOW DID
YOU--



DOCTOR, I AM
THE DONOR YOU NEED.
THERE IS NO NEED TO
WASTE TIME WITH TESTS.
MY BLOOD IS
COMPATIBLE TO
ALL BLOODS.

EH? HOW
DID YOU GET
PAST THE GUARD?
COL. RAMON
GAVE ORDERS--



YOU DO NOT
CARE WHAT THE
COLONEL ORDERED. YOU
ONLY WANT TO SAVE YOUR
PATIENT'S LIFE.

YOU NEED
ONLY LOOK DEEP
IN MY EYES TO KNOW
THIS IS TRUE. TO KNOW
YOU WILL OBEY ME.

AND THE MESMERISM THAT IS THE BIRTHRIGHT OF
EVERY DRUNKLOMAN, SWIFTLY, NEUTRALLY DOES ITS WORK...





IT'S TRUE...!
ALL I HEARD DOMINIQUE
AND RAMAN SPEAK TO DR.
VAN HELSING... THEY MEAN
TO MAKE HIM **LIVE**...
LET HIM **RULE** AGAIN..!



BROUGHT
YOU BACK AS A
ZOMBIE... AND NOW
TO TURN YOU INTO A
MAN... I **NO** PARA
YOU... I **NO**!
LET THEM..!



MAN LIKE YOU
SHOULDN'T LIVE **ONCE**
PARA YOU... LET **ALICE**
TWICE... I **TILL STOP**
THEN... JUST HAVE TO
HIDE AND WAIT..



JUST... HIDE...
AND... WAIT..



YOU UNDERSTAND YOUR WHOLE
DOCTORAT AS I SPOKE THE POWERS
OF **CHANCE** YOU WILL REWIRE THE
COUNTER-SPELL... IT SHOULD
PREVENT FORCES OF THE
NETHER-VOID FROM USING
MY INCANTATION TO BREAK
THROUGH TO EARTH!

I
UNDERSTAND
ALL TOO WELL,
MAGNUS... AND
I DON'T LIKE
IT.

JUST SO
YOU **DO** IT VAN
HELSENG! LET'S
GET **DRACKING**!



EVERY DAY
WITHOUT PARA MURDER
IS TIME FOR SUBVERSIVE
LIKE THAT **GORGON** TO
BE STIRRING UP THE
CYLIANS **AGAINST**
US!

THESE DAYS
ARE **OVER**... COLONEL...
LET US TAKE OUR PLACES...
AND **BEGIN**!

BUT AS ONE ACT OF LIFE AND DEATH STARTS ELSEWHERE
IN THE PALACE, ANOTHER IS **ENDING**...

WE SHOULD KNOW IN A MOMENT IF
THE TRANSFUSION WAS A **SUCCESS**.
IT'S FORTUNATE I DIDN'T
IMMEDIATELY FIND A WAY
INTO THE PALACE... I MIGHT NOT
HAVE FOUND PAST AND SEEN
ADAM HERE!

BUT I FEEL
SOMEHOW NOW...
THIRST, **CRAWLING**,
BEGINNING TO
OVERTAKE ME...

AND VAMPIRELLA PRODUCES A VIAL OF THICK, DARK FLUID...
THE SPECIAL **SERUM** THAT TAKEN ONCE EACH 84 HOURS
KEEPS HER FROM BEING A HUNTHRESS PREYING ON THE
BLOOD OF HUMANITY.

VAMPIRELLA... I
I WAS DYING...
F-YOU...

YES, ADAM.
WE HAVE SHARED
BLOOD, A MOST
INTIMATE RITUAL
ON MY WORLD DONE
ONLY BETWEEN
THE CLOSEST
OF FRIENDS...

...OR
LOVERS!

NOW REST
WELL, MY
DARLING. I MUST
DO WHAT I **CAME**
TO DO IN THIS
PLACE.

YOU WILL **PROTECT**
YOUR PATIENT, DOCTOR...
YOU WILL ALLOW **NO**
ONE TO HARM HIM!

I WILL
ALLOW **NO**
ONE TO HARM
HIM.

AND I **PRAY**
I'M IN **TIME** TO
DO THE SAME FOR
ADAM'S FATHER!

AND IN THE SHADOWED CHAMBER WHERE RITA VODOUN LIES, MADAME DOMINIQUE BEGINS HER CHANT TO A MAD GOD AND THE SEVEN DEMONS WHO SERVE HIM...



WE ARE COMPANIONS OF CHAOS! WE SERVE THE SEVEN WHO SERVE THE MASTER! WE STAND UPROIS THE SHATTERED CIRCLE, SYMBOL OF EARTH SPLIT ONCE MORE, WHEN THE GREEN STALK ARAW!

NOW...! MUST BE NOW...

LET ME LIVE LONG ENOUGH TO—

LIVE LONG ENOUGH TO SHOOT—

LIVE... LET ME—



THE LOOMING ALTAR, THE CHAMBER'S DARKNESS, MADAME DOMINIQUE... AND CRIES TO CHAOS WITH HIS FINAL BREATHS



HEAR US, GREAT GOD OF THE NETHER-VOID... SEND THE SPELL WE SEEK!

MAKE THE ONE PLACED BEFORE YOU WHOLE... MAKE HIM AS HE WAS!

AND FROM THAT PLACE THAT IS NOT A PLACE, FROM THAT LIMBO WHICH IS BEYOND SPACE AND TIME, REALITY ITSELF... FROM THE *NIETHER-YOND*... THE POWER OF THE MAD, BANISHED GOD *REACHES OUT!*



THEN, THE MOMENT FADES INTO BLACKNESS, STILLNESS... UNTIL...

**COLONEL!
LOOK AT THE ALTAR!
RAM YODOU
MOVES!**

AS A ZOMBIE HE WOULD
MOVE ONLY AT MY
COMMAND... THE SPELL
HAS WORKED! HE
LIVES AS HE WAS!



A MATCH REMINDS A SPARKER, AND
BRINGS LIGHT TO... **HORROR!**

EEEEEEEEEE!



MY HANDS!
WHAT HAS HAPPENED
TO MY HANDS!
ROTTING...
DECAYING...!

YES, I LIVE! JAGURS
WALKER LIVES AGAIN AS I
SHORE I WOULD! YOU HAVE
SERVED ME WELL, DOMINIQUE.
YOU AND COLONEL RAMAN!
PAPA YODOU WILL NOT
FORGET HIS WOMAN AND
HIS FRIEND!

PAPA, I MUST
**SEE YOU, HOLD
YOU AGAIN...**



**WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO ME?! WHY AM
I LIKE THIS?! A CORPSE... A ZOMBIE!
WITH THE MIND, THE THOUGHTS OF
A LIVING MAN!**



TO THE BALL...
IT ONLY WORKED IN
**ART... DON'T
RESTORE YOUR
B-BODY...**



THE THING THAT IS BOTH LIVING
MAN AND GRAVEYARD ENTITY
ATTACKS... LUNGES INTO
BLOWS WIELDED WITH
STARSPAWNED STRENGTH AND
DOLL... AND **LAUNCHES!**

USELESS...! YOU MAY SLOW ME, BUT YOU CANNOT STOP ME. NO MORE THAN THE OTHERS DID, NO MORE THAN THE OLD ONE YOU HOPE TO SAVE WILL AFTER YOU DIE!

DEAD FLESH
CAN FEEL NO PAIN.
SUFFER NO PAIN.

**BUT IT CAN
STILL BURN!**

AND IN A FIERY HELL, RARA VODOU DIES HIS SECOND DEATH. AND IF THE SPIRIT THAT WAS TRAPPED IN THAT DECAYING FORM STILL SURVIVES, IT LIVES NOW IN ASHES AND DUST.

YOU... **SAVED** ME.
I WHO HAVE DEDICATED
MY LIFE TO STAMPING
OUT YOU AND YOUR KIND.

THIS ISN'T THE
TIME FOR RESOLVING
OUR DIFFERENCES—IF THEY
CAN BE RESOLVED, DR.
NAN HELDING WE MUST
LEAVE HERE BEFORE--

**ASSASSINS!
YOU WILL GO
NOWHERE...
EXCEPT AS
CORPSES!**

BUT AS THE FIGHTERS OF THE PALACE GUARDS TIGHTEN ON THE TRIGGERS OF THEIR WEAPONS...



B-BUT... WHEN I AWOKE JUST NOW, MY CLOTHES WERE STILL SOAKING WITH **BLOOD**... BUT THERE WASN'T A **WOUND** ON MY BODY!

I'M JUST AS I WAS BEFORE THE GREAT POLICE **SHOT** ME!



THE **SPELL!**



PAUL!
PAUL GRAUD!
WHERE DO YOU--

IS IT TRUE? IS IT REALLY YOU, MY BOY? COL. RAMM INSERRED YOU WERE **DEAD!**

THERE WAS A **MOMENT** BEFORE THIS ALAR, WHEN I THOUGHT I **WAS!**

YOU WERE USING SO **CLOSE** TO RANA YOURSELF, THE POWER FROM CHAOS WAS **SPLIT** BETWEEN YOU! IT RESTORED HIS **MIND** AND YOUR BODY, AND EVIDENTLY DEATH HADN'T **QUITE** CLAIMED YOU... SO YOU'RE NOW **COMPLETELY** WELL!



AND TO STAY THAT MAY WE'D BEST GET **ADAM** AND GET **OUT** OF HERE!

A SHORT TIME LATER, AS DAWN'S FIRST LIGHT REACHES TO TOUCH CÔTE DE SOLER... AN AMBULANCE LEAVES THE ROYAL PALACE,



YOUR WAY WITH **ANARCHISM** DO MORE FOR US THAN A TROOP OF **GUERRILLAS**, VAMPIRELLA...

BUT WE WON'T HAVE TO BE FUGITIVES LONG. ONCE WORD IS OUT THAT DOMINIQUE AND RAMM ARE DEAD, THE HOLD OF THE VALIER FACTION ON OUR GOVERNMENT WILL **CRUMBLE!**

SO WITHIN THE INTERIOR OF THE SPEEDING VEHICLE THERE SETTLES
FOUR OF *PEACE* ... AND AN UNSPOKEN *TRUCE* BETWEEN A GIRL FROM
THE STARS AND THE STERN OLD MAN WHO HAS SWORN TO KILL HER!

BUT HOW LONG WILL
THIS *LAST*? UNTIL HE
NO LONGER HAS TO
BE CONCERNED FOR
ADAM AND CAN
TURN HIS THOUGHTS
TO *ME*?

PERSUAS IT'S
TIME TO FIND
PENDORAGON AND
LEAVE ... BEFORE
THAT HAPPENS, BEFORE
I PUT THE MAN I LOVE
AGAINST HIS
FATHER, AGAIN!

EPICLOGUE: ELSEWHERE IN CÔTE DE SOULS,
IN ITS NARROW BACKSTREETS, THE FIRST LIGHT
DOESN'T PENETRATE... FOR THOSE WANDERING
HERE, IT IS STILL NIGHT.

SAMMIT, HUN... GET *HOLD*
OF YOURSELF! YOU MUST DO
SOMETHING TO HELP
VAMPIRELLA AND THE
OTHERS! IF ONLY I *KNEW*
SOMEONE HERE...

MR.
PENDORAGON!

I HAVE BEEN SEARCHING FOR
YOU FOR SOME *TIME*, MR.
PENDORAGON. I TOO HAVE CONCERN
FOR YOUR *FRIENDS*. HOW
FORTUNATE YOU WANDERED
MY WAY...

W-WHO...?

YES, I
TRUST YOU. I
WILL GO WITH
YOU, MISTER-
MYSTER...

YOU HAVE THE
ADVANTAGE, SR.
I DON'T *KNOW*
YOU.

YET AT A *GLANCE*
YOU CAN TELL I WILL
HELP YOU... THAT IT
IS SAFE TO *TRUST*
ME. CAN'T YOU JUST
LOOK INTO MY
EYES...

I HAVE
HAD MANY
NAMES AT MANY
TIMES MY FRIEND.
BUT I FIND I
CONSTANTLY
CLING TO THE
OLDEST ONE.
I AM *COUNT*
DRACULA!

AND THE TELL MAN, THE AGELESS MAN, SILENTLY LEADS PENDORAGON INTO THE SHADOWS. SHADOWS THAT ARE LONG
AND STRETCH FAR, SHADOWS THAT WILL SOON TOUCH THE GIRL IN A WORLD NOT HER OWN... *VAMPIRELLA!*
NEXT ISSUE: "... AND BE A BRIDE OF CHAOS!"

END

PROLOGUE: THE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT ON THE ISLAND REPUBLIC OF COTE DE SOLEIL HAS PROVIDED THE BACKGROUND FOR A WIDE SPECTRUM OF EVENTS. THOSE WHO THROUGHS ITS OBSERVATION DECKS HAVE BEEN WITNESSES TO POLITICAL ASSASSINATION, CRASH LANDINGS, AND THE ARRIVAL OF MOVIE STARS... BUT NEVER A THING LIKE THIS. THE APPEARANCE FROM NOWHERE OF A GIRL IN FRONT OF A PLANE, CLEARED FOR DEPARTURE, AN APPEARANCE THAT WOULD SEEM NO LESS REMARKABLE IF THEY UNDERSTOOD THE POWERS THAT BROUGHT HER THERE, IF THEY KNEW THIS WAS A GIRL FROM ANOTHER WORLD. A GIRL, CALLED...

VAMPIRELLA



YES, EVERYONE SEES THIS GIRL, BUT WHO NOTICED THE **BAT** THAT FLUTTERED FROM THE SKY A FEW SECONDS PREVIOUS? THE BAT THAT IN A TWINKLING **BECAME** THE GIRL NOW URGENTLY SHOUTING...





ADAM?
ARE YOU
AWAKE?

RIGHT.
DAD, GUESS THE
SOUND OF THAT JET
CUT THROUGH MY
SLEEP.



WHAT'S *THAT*? MEANS VAMPIRELLA
GAVE ME A TRANSFUSION THAT SAVED
MY LIFE WHEN I WAS SHOT! CAN YOU
STILL THINK SHE'S SOME KIND
OF MONSTER, AFTER THIS—

DAD!
WHAT ARE YOU
DOING!!



IT WAS GREAT OF PAUL GRAUD
TO FIND A PLACE FOR ME TO
RECOVER... SHOULDN'T
COMPLAIN IF IT'S CLOSE
TO THE AIRPORT.

WHERE'S
VAMPIRELLA?

GONE TO HELP
HER FRIEND, PENDERAGON—
SHE CLAIMED.

I AM PREPARING TO DO
BATTLE WITH THE BRAND OF
EVIL WE VAN HELSINGERS HAVE
FOUGHT FOR NEARLY A
CENTURY NOW. YOUR
GIRL, FROM ANOTHER WORLD
IS INVOLVED...



PERHAPS INNOCENTLY,
PERHAPS *NOT*. I'LL KNOW
WHEN I FIND HER...



... AND THE MAN WHO
WROTE *THIS*! THE MESSAGE
SENT HER RUSHING AFTER
PENDERAGON, BUT IT IS THE
SEAL WHICH INTERESTED ME.
JUST FEELING ITS EMBOSSED
FORM I RECOGNIZED
IT. DO YOU, ADAM...?

THAT'S THE
COAT OF ARMS OF...
DRACULA!



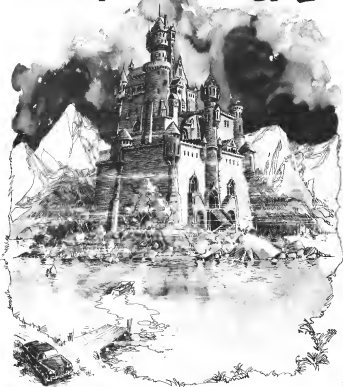
IT *CAN'T* BE...!
OUR OWN ANCESTOR
HELPED DESTROY HIM!
RIGHT, DAD... *RIGHT?*

I'LL KNOW *THAT*
ADAM, ONCE I FIND
THE WRITER OF
THAT NOTE!

WHEN YOU'RE WELL
ENOUGH TO TRAVEL,
FOLLOW ME, SON.

THE VALLEY AND THE BLACK, BLACK, LIKE IT CRAOLES LIES DEEP AMID THE CARNIC ALPS, SET IN ITS MIDST, LIKE SOME GRAY, CRUSTED JEWEL, IS THE CASTLE. HERE, FOR A WEEK, NOW, THE GUESTS HAVE BEEN ARRIVING, MEN, WOMEN, FROM EVERY CORNER OF THE GLOBE, BUT RENDERED SIMILAR IN TWO ASPECTS... THE TRACE OF WEALTH, THE TOUCH OF DECADENCE, FOR A WEEK, NOW THEY HAVE COME TO THE CASTLE AND WAITED, WAITED FOR THE ARRIVAL OF THEIR HOST AND THE BEGINNING OF A CEREMONY, A CEREMONY IN WHICH ONE WILL BE CHOSEN...

...AND BE A BRIDE OF CHAOS



NOW, AS DAWN GIVES WAY TO APPROACHING NIGHT, TWO
LAST SURVIVORS COME TO THE CASTLE...



COUNT MORGANTE
TELEPHONED ME TO MAKE
YOU COMFORTABLE UNTIL
HIS ARRIVAL... AND TO
EXPRESS HIS REGRETS
FOR NOT ACCOMPANYING
YOU ON THE DRIVE
FROM THE AIRFIELD.

SEE, VAMPIRELLA,
OUR HOST MAY BE
ELUSIVE, BUT WHO
COULD QUESTION HIS
HOSPITALITY?



YOUR ROOM, SIGNORINA.
THE GENTLEMEN IS JUST
ACROSS THE HALL.

PENDRAGON: COULD
YOU *STAY* FOR A WHILE? I
FEEL UNEASY... PARTICULARLY
SINCE ARRIVING *HERE*.

BUT THIS WHOLE
BUSINESS SEEMS
ODD TO TRAVEL
WITH A MAN AND
NEVER, *SEE* HIM!



FIRST THE COUNT
WAS RESTING, THEN
BUSINESS TOOK HIM
OFF THE PLANE AHEAD
OF US! AND NOW...

NOW, YOU'RE
LETTING THIS GREAT,
GLOOMY STONE NOVEL
GIVE YOU A CASE OF
ANEMIES, MY DEAR!
YOU MERELY NEED
SOMETHING TO LIFT
YOUR SPIRITS.

AND
DRINKS OF
SPIRITS...



... BY SHEER
COINCIDENCE I HAVE IN MY
POSSESSION A RARE ELIXIR
OF *AMAZING* POTENCY!
NATURALLY, I REALIZE YOUR
OTHERWORLDLY DIETARY
WANTS OFTEN *PROCLUDE*
SUCH INDULGENCES, BUT--



PENDRAGON!
IN THE COURTYARD--
THE MEN WHO BROUGHT
US ON THE LAUNCH!
CARRYING
A COFFIN!

EH?!



PLACE SEEMS **EMPTY**
NOW, MY DEAR. REMEMBER
WHAT I SAID ABOUT
NERVES--

BUT I **KNOW**
I SAW IT,
PENDRAGON!



PERHAPS THEN IT WAS **ANOTHER**
MANIFESTATION OF OUR HOST'S
MACABRE HUMOR.

YOU CAN'T EXPECT
ANYONE WHO'D WIRE AN
OLD FRAUD LIKE ME
TO BE PERFECT!



HAVING **DRUNK** TO THAT, I'D BEST GET
TO MY ROOM, VAMPIRELLA. AFTER ALL,
WE'VE A **PERFORMANCE** TO GIVE! AND
DON'T WORRY... **MY NERVES** ARE NOW
SETTLED ENOUGH FOR **BOTH** OF US!



COME, COME, MY
DEAR! AFTER ALL, WE'VE
BEEN THROUGH TOGETHER,
WOULD I BE LIKELY TO LEAD
US INTO DANGER?

TRUST TO
PENDRAGON,
VAMPIRELLA, MY
SWEET!

BUT, PENDRAGON--
HOW MUCH DO YOU
REALLY KNOW ABOUT
THIS PLACE, ABOUT COUNT
MORDANTE HIMSELF?

BUT WHAT OF THE **OTHER** GUESTS IN THE SPRAWLING HOME OF COUNT MORDANTE?
WHAT OF THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN WAITING... IMPATIENTLY WAITING...?



IT'S DARK! WHY WOULDN'T HE **APPEARED**
YET? FOR A WEEK WE HAVE SAT IDLE
WHILE HE TRAPPED ABOUT THE GLOBE.
IF A DECISION ISN'T MADE
TONIGHT--

I ASSURE YOU,
LUCRETTIA, ONE
WILE BE.



ALL HAIL COUNT DRACULA—
SUPREME LEADER OF THE
COMPANIONS OF CHAOS!

AND NOW WE MUST CHOOSE!
THE ONE WOMAN AMONG US
WORTHY TO BECOME
BRIDE TO HIM WHOM
WE WORSHIP...

THE WOMAN
WHO SHALL HAVE
THE HONOR OF HONORS...
WHO SHALL BEAR THE CHILD
OF CHAOS! WHO SHALL LOOSE
THE SEED OF THE MAD GOD
UPON THE EARTH, SO HE, AND
HIS MAY RULE AGAIN!

QUITE SO, DEAR
LUCRETIA... ALL IN GOOD
TIME. BUT FOR THE MOMENT...
I'VE ARRANGED A SMALL
ENTERTAINMENT.



AN ENTERTAINMENT I
COUNT, WE ARE HIGH
PRIESTS AND PRIESTESSES
OF CHAOS FROM CULTS ALLOVER
THE WORLD... HERE FOR ONE
DECISION, AND THAT
DECISION ONLY!

AND I AM
DRACULA... WHO
MUST BE OBEYED!
INTO THE THEATRE!



NOW, MY
FRIENDS... I PRESENT
THE GREAT
PENDRAGON!





COUNT, ARE YOU
MADE TO ME WHO HAVE
 MASTERED THE SPELLS OF THE
CRIMSON CHRONICLES.
 SIBBLE OF CHAOS, YOU
 PRESENT SOME BARELY
 COMPETENT
TRICKSTER?

YOU ARE
 WITHOUT PEER,
 IN SERVING CHAOS,
 LUCRETIA, BUT SADLY
 LACK AN UNDERSTANDING
 OF **SNOWMANSHIP**. IT IS
 AN ACT'S **FINALE**
 THAT COUNTS.



AND HERE, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,
 SINGING & DANCING... THE LOVELY
 AND MYSTERIOUS... **VAMPIRELLA!**

STRANGE...
 EVERYONE ON MY
 HOME WORLD HAS THE
 ABILITY TO TAKE **BAT**
FORM. YET HERE IT
 SEEMS A
 REMARKABLE FEAT
 OF **MAGIC**...

ESCAPE FROM THE WINDOWLESS CHAMBER, CUT
 OFF, VAMPIRELLA IS DRIVEN BACK TO THE STAGE.



COUNT! WHAT
 DOES THIS **MAJIN**?
 THE GIRL IS ONE
 OF YOURS!

NOT QUITE,
 LUCRETIA. **QUICKLY,**
BAR ALL DOORS!
SEAL OFF
THE ROOM!

PENDRAGON!
 BACK THROUGH THE
 CURTAINS... THIS IS SOME
 SORT OF **TRAP!**
P. PENDRAGON--?

WHAT'S WRONG
 WITH YOU? WHY
 DON'T YOU **MOVE**...



BECAUSE HAVING SERVED
 THE TASK, I **SET** HIM TO. HE
 REVERTS TO HIS **TRUE** STATE...
 A ZOMBIE-LIKE **MAJIN** OF
 DRACULA!

THEN WHATEVER
ELSE HAPPENS... YOU'LL
PAY FOR WHAT YOU'VE
 DONE TO HIM!



HOW WILL YOU **MAKE** ME MY
 GIRL FROM BEYOND THE STARS?
 MY STRENGTH, MY
 COMBAT SKILLS,
 ARE THE **EQUAL**
 OF YOURS...

AND I
 HAVE HAD
 THEM
LONGER!

BEHOLD, FELLOW COMPANIONS IN THE CUST OF CHAOS— SHE WHO WILL BE THE GREAT GOD'S BRIDE!

NO!

IT CAN'T BE SOME *OUTSIDER!* THE HONOR MUST GO TO ONE OF *US*... ONE WHO HAS SERVED CHAOS UNSELFISHLY, UNINTINGLY...!

YES, *ME!* I, WHO HAVE GARNERED MORE SOULS FOR THE MASTER, THAN *ANY* PRIESTESS... I, WHO HAVE DENIED MYSELF THE LOVE OF ANY *MORTAL*, THAT I MIGHT REMAIN *UNSPOILED* FOR MIGHTY CHAOS HIMSELF!

IF ANY IS FIT TO BE HIS BRIDE, TO BEAR HIS CHILD... IT IS *ME!*

ONE SUCH AS YOU, LUCRETIA?

BENEATH YOUR SHOUTING I HEAR ONE WORD, LUCRETIA— *AMBITION*. GREATER QUALITIES THAN *THAT* ARE NECESSARY FOR THE MOTHER OF A CHILD OF CHAOS!

WHAT QUALITIES CAN *SHE* HAVE? ONE OF YOUR *UNDEAD*... A MERE *VAMPIRE*?!!

SHE IS NO MERE VAMPIRE, LUCRETIA... *MORE* MERE MORTAL, AS ARE YOU AND THE OTHERS! SHE IS OF A RACE SUPERIOR TO BOTH...

THE RACE THAT SPAWNED *COUNT DRACULA*!



AS WE TAKE
HER TO THE CHAMBER,
BENEATH THE LAKE
WHERE THE GREAT GOD
CHAOS WILL BE SUMMONED
FORTH, I WILL **TELL**
YOU OF THAT
RACE...

I WILL TELL YOU
WHAT NEITHER
MORTAL NOR UNDEAD
HAS **HEARD**
BEFORE...

I WILL TELL
YOU THE **ORIGIN**
OF DRACULA!

"LET YOUR MINDS DRIFT WITH MINE, MY COMPANIONS, ACROSS THE IMMENSURABLE WISTNESS OF SPACE, BACK UNCOUNTABLE CENTURIES IN TIME, TO A WORLD REVOLVING ABOUT TWO SUNS, A WORLD CALLED **DRAKULON!**"



"THIS IS A WORLD WHERE **BLOOD**, NOT WATER, FLOWS IN SUSHING STREAMS. STREAMS WHICH IN TIME WILL TURN TO **DUST** UNDER THE EVER-MOUNTING HEAT OF THE TWO SUNS, BUT WHICH, AT THIS MOMENT, PROVIDE **SUSTENANCE** FOR THE PLANET'S POPULATION..."



"...WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THOSE WHO FOLLOW AN **OLDER** TRADITION, A TRADITION OF HUNTERS AND WARRIORS... A TRADITION LONG **OUTLAWED**."



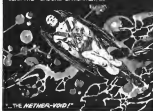
YOU ARE A **BARBARIAN!**
KILLING YOUR FELLOW MAN, DRINKING
THE **LIFE** FROM HIS VEINS... ALL
BECAUSE OF SOME PRIMITIVE
BELIEF THAT YOU TAKE ON THE
STRENGTH OF THE BLAIN!

I WAS **RAISED**
TO LOVE THE HUNT,
THE KILL, THE
EXCITEMENT... BETTER,
THAN THAN WALLOWING AT
SOME STREAM LIKE A
BARMYRD ANIMAL!

"I SPOKE THOSE WORDS... AND IN SPEAKING, THEN CONDEMNED MYSELF TO **DEATH**. DEATH IN THE **DISINTEGRATION CHAMBER**... TO BE THE FOCAL POINT OF SUCH INCREDIBLE, UNCHECKED POWER, THAT THE BODY, THE SOUL... THE ESSENCE OF THE BEING, BECAME **NOTHING**..."



"FOR SO BELIEVED THE ELDERS OF DRAGONIA! BUT SO **GRANT** WAS THE FORCE THAT STRUCK ME, MY BODY WAS NOT DISINTEGRATED, BUT **DISPLACED**... FORCED FROM ONE PLANE OF EXISTENCE INTO **ANOTHER**. FORCED BY COSMIC ACCIDENT INTO A DIMENSION WHERE A MAD GOD AND HIS SEVEN DEMON SERVANTS ENJOY BANISHMENT..."



"...THE **KETHER-VORD**!"

"AND AS I DRIFTED IN THAT PLACE NOT A PLACE, SOMETHING FORMED BEFORE ME, SOMETHING INDISTINCT, YET AWESOME... CHALLENGING THE ICY CONTROL BREED IN EACH DRAGONIAN... I LOOKED UPON THE **FACE OF CHAOS!**"



"AND THE MAD GOD SAW IN ME A **SERVANT**. ONE TO AID IN HIS BATTLE TO REGAIN THE WORLD HE HAD LOST... **EARTH**..."

"THOUGH LACKING POWER TO FREE MYSELF, CHAOS WAS ABLE TO PIERCE THE DIMENSIONAL BARRIER, ENOUGH SO I COULD COME TO EARTH..."



"...AND IN MY NAME, LOOSE **HELLHOUNDS** UPON THE WORLD!"

"THE POWER OF CHAOS MADE MY BITE **INFECTIOUS**. EACH DYING VICTIM WOULD BECOME A VAMPIRE IN TURN..."



"BUT IN PASSING THROUGH DIMENSIONS, MY **BODY STRUCTURE** WAS ALTERED. IT COULD NOT SURVIVE IN **SUNLIGHT**. THIS TOO WAS PASSED ON TO MY VICTIMS..."

"STILL I **ENDURED**, ACQUIRING NEW CHAOS-GRANTED STRENGTHS THROUGH THE AGES. EVEN AS I **LOST** MANY DRAGONIAN QUALITIES. IN TIME, I WAS ABLE TO MOVE AND LIVE AMONG HUMANS..."



"BUT IN TAKING A **HUMAN** FOR THIS HUMAN EXISTENCE, I KEPT A VESTIGE OF MY **OLD** WORLD... FOR OUT OF DRAGONIA CAME **DRACULA!**"

"IN COUNT DRACULA I REACHED THE PEAK OF MY POWERS AND DURING THE LAST CENTURY DECIDED TO END MY WORK IN THE CAUSE OF CHAOS FROM TRANSYLVANIA, WHERE I'D SETTLED TO THE WORLD..."



"BUT IN COMING TO ENGLAND AND MAKING A VICTIM OF ONE **LUCY MISTEYRA**, THE SEEDS OF MY FIRST DEFEAT WERE SOWN."

"BUT THOUGH MY BODY PERISHED, THE POWERS OF CHAOS KEPT MY SPIRIT ALIVE IN THE EARTH AND ASHES OF MY COFFIN! AND WHEN A YOUNG WARETEL NAMED **ADRIAN WARNEY** CHOSE TO LIE IN THE COFFIN AS A JOKE... I TOOK CONTROL OF HIM!"



"SEE 'THE COFFIN OF DRACULA' CREEPY #8 AND 9

"AND **AGAIN** I ENCOUNTERED VAN HELSING! ATTEMPTING TO ESCAPE... MY CARriage VEERED OFF A CLIFF... MY HOST WARNEY DIED IN THE WRECKAGE, AND THE COFFIN WITH MY SPIRIT WAS LOST IN THE SEA!"



"FOR I WAS THROWN INTO CONFLICT WITH PROFESSOR **ABRAHAM VAN HELSING**, A MAN AS DEDICATED TO THE CHASE OF GOOD AND ORDER AS I TO EVIL AND CHAOS! HE LED THE MARCH THAT ENDED IN THE BORGIO PASS..."



"...WITH MY DEATH AT THE HANDS OF VAN HELSING'S PEERS: **JOSEPHIN WARNER, DR. SEWARD, LORD GOLDMANN, AND QUINCY MORGAN...**"

"SEE BRAM STOKER'S NOVEL, DRACULA

"IT SEEMED AT LAST FINAL DOOM HAD COME... UNTIL **SMUGGLERS**, SEEKING LOST BOOTY, DREDGED THE COFFIN FROM THE ICE DEPTHS, AND THEIR MACABRE-MINDED **CAPTAIN** WAS MOVED TO JEIST AS **WARNEY** HAD!"



"FOR ANY OF AN EVIL NATURE WHO LIE IN THE COFFIN ARE SUSCEPTIBLE TO MY WILL, BECOME **HOSTS** TO MY SPIRIT! BUT THAT ALONE DOES NOT MAKE ME THE DRACULA OF OLD..."



"ONLY WHEN MY HOSTS BECOME **PARASITES**, AS I WAS, DO MY FULL POWERS RETURN!"

"SO I HAVE SURVIVED THROUGH TO THE PRESENT. SO I OBTAINED THIS HOST-BODY YOU, MY COMPANIONS IN CHAOS'S CLUT, KNOWN AS **COUNT MORGANTE**. SO I NEVER **CEASED** TO SERVE THE GREATER GLORY OF THE MAD GOD..."





...AND I HAVE
NEVER SERVED HIM
BETTER THAN IN
PRESENTING *THIS*
GIRL TO HIM AS HIS
[BROG]

IT WILL BE YEARS,
PERHAPS *CENTURIES*,
BEFORE THE TIME, THE
CONDITIONS, ARE AGAIN
RIGHT TO BRING FORTH
A CHILD OF CHAOS...

THERE MUST
BE NO *AMISTAKE*!
THE CHOSEN ONE
MUST BE *SUPERIOR*,
TO MERE MORTALS...
AS IS THIS MAD OF
DRAKULONI!

NO! YOU WISH IT TO
BE ONE OF YOUR CHOOSING
SO YOU DON'T HAVE TO SHARE
THE POWER, AND LEADERSHIP
OF THE CULT!

NO ONE IS MORE
DEVOTED TO CHAOS
THAN I! THE HONOR
WASN'T GO TO THIS
OUTSIDER... IT
SHOULD BE *MINE*!



SILENCE, WOMAN!
I ALONE HAVE LOOKED ON
THE FACE OF CHAOS, I
ALONE TRULY KNOW HIS
WANTS, HIS NEEDS... THAT
IS WHY I AM *SUPREME*
LEADER OF THE
CULT!

AND YOUR
LEADER TELLS
YOU THE MATTER
IS *SETTLED*!



WHAHRELLA
SHALL BE *BRIDE* OF
CHAOS! SHE SHALL BEAR
THE CHILD WHO WILL RETURN
THE *ANCIENT WAYS*...
WHO SHALL PLUNGE BARTH
BACK TO THIS DAYS
BEFORE THE POWER OF
ORDER HELD SWAY!



THIS IS AS FAR, AS I TAKE
YOU, SIGNOR, VAN HELDING, THERE
STANDS THE CASTLE OF **COUNT
MORDANTE!** A CHILLING THING
TO VIEW IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT—
BUT I **FORGET**, YOU
CANNOT SEE.

YOU **ALSO**
FORGET THE LARGE
SUM I FIND YOU
INCLUDED BEING
ADMITTED TO
THE ISLAND.



THAT WAS OVER,
DRINKS AT THE INN,
SINKS! OUT HERE IN
THE **CANAL**, STORIES
HEARD OF **GOMMES-
ON** IN THAT PLACE
RACING THROUGH
ONE'S MIND...



... A MAN COMES
TO HIS **SENSES!**
HE SEES THE
WISDOM OF—



OF
RECONSIDERING
BEFORE HE CHEATS
A BLIND MAN?



AH, MR. PENDORAGON,
YOU HAVE BEEN MOST
PATIENT. MY BUSINESS
IN SERVICE OF **CHANDS**
IS ENDED FOR THE
MOMENT...



THERE IS TIME FOR MORE
PERSONAL PLEASURES...
SUCH AS AN EVENING
ANGEL! AND SINCE I NO
LONGER **NEED** YOU...



BUT **WAIT!** IF
THAT **SOUND** DRIFTING
UP FROM THE LAKE
MEANS WHAT I **THINK**...



YES, MR. FENRASON,
YOU HAVE A
REPRIEVE.

IT APPEARS
THIS WILL BE A
TIME FOR PERSONAL
PLEASURES
INDEED!

A DARK FORM SHOOTS FROM THE CASTLE WINDOW,
SUDDENLY SWIFTLY, A BOAT ROCKS WILDLY ON THE
WATER. A SCREAM STARTS IN A MAN'S THROAT BUT
IS NEVER FINISHED.



AND THE LAKE IS SILENT ONCE MORE.

CONRID VAN HELSING FLATTENS BACK INTO THE BALCONY
AS THOUGH WISHING THE COLD STONE OF HIS BACK COULD
ENVELOP HIM. HE CANNOT SEE THE NIGHTED SHAPES
CROSSING THE FACE OF THE MOON, BUT THE SOUND OF
LEATHERY WINGS IS LIKE THUNDER TO HIS KEENLY
DEVELOPED HEARING...



THEN IT'S GONE, AND VAN HELSING IS ALONE. A MAN
WITHOUT RIGHT ABOUT TO STORM A CASTLE.

RUSHING WATER
AHEAD, IF IT'S SOME
SORT OF **DRAGON**...



MEANWHILE, IN THE GREAT CAVERN BENEATH THE LAKE, UMBRELLA STRAINS AT THE SARCOPHAGUS BINDING HER... IN
VEN, POWERLESS TO TAKE BIRD-FORM WHILE SOUND, SHE CAN ONLY STRUGGLE AND STARE AT THE SYMBOL ON THE
WALL ABOVE HER, WHICH HAS BEGUN TO PULSE AND GLOW, SHIPING AND PUSHING AT THE SURROUNDING
D RINGLESS...



AND IN THAT DARKNESS... SOMETHING **STIRS**.

FINGERS SLUDDY FROM PUMBLING AGAINST IRON-CRUSTED DRUM-WALLS FIGHT TO GRIP THE HOLDS OF A GRATE, RUSTED IRON SCRAPPLS ACROSS DINK COULDESTONE...



...AND CONRAD VAN HELSING ENTERS CASTLE MORDANTE.

NO LONGER ANY DOUBT... MY **PSYCHIC VISION**, MY SECOND SIGHT SCREAMS IT TO ME! COUNT DRACULA **LIVES**... HERE!

MORNING SUN ON MY BACK... I'VE THE DAY TO FIND HIM!



BUT THE CASTLE IS VAST, SPRAWLING... AND **SUNSET** COMES QUICKLY AMID THE THRUSTING ALPS.

NOISE DRIFTING DOWN FROM ABOVE... SO **MANY** VOICES...!



AND THOSE VOICES **SMELL** AS VAN HELSING MOVES THROUGH THE CASTLE PROPER, SEARCHING, SLOWLY SEARCHING. NO ONE ELSE WALKS THE LABYRINTHINE HALLS. ALL OTHERS ARE IN THEIR ROOMS... **CHANTING**. A CHANT BEGUN SINCE DRACULA DISMISSED THEM THE PREVIOUS NIGHT. A CHANT THAT CONTINUES THROUGH THE DAY, GROWING, BUILDING.



...REACHING DEEP INTO THE GREAT CAVERN, BRIDAL CHAMBER OF **CHARGE!** AND HERE HIS SYMBOL NO LONGER MERELY GLOWS, BUT **PULSES** WITH A BLINDING, RADIATING **ENERGY** IN RHYTHM WITH THE CHANT. A RHYTHM BECOMING EVER MORE STRONGER, EVER MORE POWERFUL...



UNTIL EVEN THE RAVEN-TRESSED FIGURE ON THE ALTAR BEGINS TO SLOWLY, INVOLUNTARILY, UNDULATE TO ITS BEAT.



AND FOR CONRAD VAN HELSING THE CHINT IS A THROBING PUNCTURE *DURING* THE PSYCHIC EMANATIONS HE NOTED WOULD GUIDE HIM. *SLOWING* HIS GROUND, AS OUTSIDE DAYLIGHT DIMS AND SHADOWS GROW LONG, THEN...

HERE? THE EVIL, HIS PRESENCE GENERATES STRIKES AT MY SENSES LIKE A LIVING THING!



AND HE'S NOT YET *AWAKENED!* THERE'S STILL *TIME!*

TIME TO MAKE CERTAIN THAT NO MATTER *HOW* HE'S MANAGED TO RETURN TO FLAQUE MARKING...



COUNT DRACULA DIES!



W-WHAT... NO *BLOOD* FLOWS FROM THE WOUND...!



UNLIKE *WERTHER*, DR. VAN HELSING, SERVING CHAOS IS *NOT* ITS OWN REWARD...



FOR BEING THE ONE TO PROVIDE HIM WITH HIS NEEDS *BRIDE*, CHAOS LAST NIGHT GRANTED ME A MOST USEFUL POWER... *IMMUNITY TO THE STAKE!*

I *COULD* HAVE SLAIN YOU AS YOU FIRST COVERED AGAINST THE CASTLE RAMPARTS DOCTOR... BUT WAITING UNTIL THIS MOMENT SEEMED INFINITELY MORE *AMUSING!*



YOU'VE *PLANNED* ALL THIS...!

AS THE GIRL FOLLOWED PERDRAGON, SO I KNEW YOU WOULD FOLLOW *ME!*

IN CHOOSING *MINNAPHELLE* TO BE THE GREAT GOD'S SAID I SERVED *MYSELF* AS WELL AS CHAOS! I ATTAIN MY GREATEST POWER EVER AND EXTINGUISH THE LINE OF MY MOST HATED ENEMY!



BUT AS VAMPIRELLA TENSES AGAINST THE FINAL ONSLAUGHT OF DRACULA, A WILD LIGHT FILLS THE CAVERN, WHERE ONCE SHE WAS PRISONER, AND OUT ITS THROBBING BRILLIANCE, A SHADOW GROWS, UNTIL IT FALLS ACROSS THE WHITE, SHAPELY FORM OF LUCRETIA.



TINKLING WITH *WIS* AND ANTICIPATION OF A MOMENT SHE HAS DREAMED OF, PLANNED FOR, THE PRIESTESS OF THE CULT OF CHAOS LIFTS HER HEAD...

...AND LOOKS FULL ON THE FACE OF HIM TO WHOM SHE HAS GIVEN HERSELF AS BRIDE! AND IN THE LOOKING LEARNS WHAT ALIEN-BODI SENSIBILITIES SUCH AS DRACULA'S OR VAMPIRELLA'S MIGHT BE ABLE TO VIEW AND ABSORB... A HUMAN CANNOT! AND IN THE LEAVING... **DIES!**



AT THAT *INSTANT*, KNOWLEDGE COMES ALSO TO COUNT DRACULA... THAT A GOD'S GIFT, SWIFTLY GIVEN, IS GIVEN MORE SWIFTLY *WITHDRAWN*!

MY **CHEST!** WHERE
THE **STAKE** WAS
DRIVEN—**BOOOOOO!!**



SOMETHING **AWAYED**
DOWN THERE... SOMETHING
TO CHEAT CHAOS OF TAKING
HIS **BRIDE** OF BRINGING
A **CHILD** INTO THIS
WORLD...

VAMPIRELLA...WE'D
BEST GET *OUT* OF
HERE! THE WRATH OF A
CHEATED AND
FRUSTRATED
GOD...



...WILL BE GREAT MOVED!



END



VAMPIRELLA







"I... I'M NOT SURE HOW IF HE IS, IT'S THE LAST I SAW OF HIM WAS ONE WEEK AGO. HE LOOKED LIKE DEATH HAD WALKED OVER..."

"HE WAS SO WEAK, RUN DOWN, / HE HAD CRAWLED HIM TO THE EDGE OF HIS GRAVE, AND WAS PUSHING HARD TO SPOKE HIM IN..."



HENDERSON KNEW THE END WAS NEAR, HE ORDERED ME TO READY HIS JET FOR IT'S FINAL FLIGHT. HE WANTED TO GO HOME... TO DIE IN HIS NATIVE TEXAS."



PEN... I SWEAR... WHEN I HELPED THE BOSS ABOARD THAT PLANE, THERE WAS NO ONE BUT HIM AND ME IN THAT BIRD."

"I FLEW THE PLANE FROM ACHAPULCO TO HOUSTON WHILE H.H., I THOUGHT, SLEPT IN THE RE-ARWARD CABIN."

"BUT WHEN I LANDED THAT BIRD ON TEXAS SOIL, AND WENT TO HELP HENDERSON DISMOUNT, I FOUND... I FOUND... A NIGHTMARE!"



"HIS BRAIN AND HIS EYES HAD BEEN CUT OUT OF HIS SKULL!"



OH, MY GOD!

IT WAS HORRIBLE! I RADIOED THE TOWER MR. HUNT HAD EXPIRED IN MID-FLIGHT. I ORDERED A COFFIN DELIVERED TO THE JET.

NO ONE SAW THE BODY EXCEPT MR. HUNT'S PHYSICIAN WHO WAS AS SHOCKED AS I AT THE CONDITION OF THE BOSS' CORPSE.



HE FALSIFIED THE DEATH CERTIFICATE, CLAIMING H.H. HAD DIED OF A STROKE.

THE COFFIN WAS SEALED AND NO ONE WAS THE WISER.

B-BUT I SWEAR TO YOU, PEN... I... I JUST DON'T KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO THE BOSS WHILE I WAS PILOTING THAT PLANE!



THUD!

WH-WHO COULD HAVE STOLEN A MAN'S BRAIN... AND WHY--? HUH?

PEN! LOOK! G-GAS! CHOKE! A-MOOD BLACKING OUT! COUGH!?

SOME TIME LATER, TWO DROWZY FIGURES STIR... AND SLOWLY BEGIN STUNNED, SLEEPY SENSES.

P-PEN!
A-ARE YOU
ALRIGHT?

V-VAMPI!
W-WHERE
ARE WE?

I'M NOT SURE
THE LAST THING
I REMEMBER
IS THE CAR...
THE GAS!

CHARLIE!
WHERE'S
CHARLIE? WHAT'S
HAPPENED TO
HIM?

IF WE FIND
OUT WHERE WE
ARE... JUST MAYBE
WE'LL BE ABLE TO
FIND YOUR FRIEND!
AGHHH!

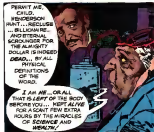
T-THOSE
LADIES--!

SO BRISAT...
W-WHERE ARE
THEY COMING
FROM?











PROLOGUE: WHAT ROOM IS THIS... WHAT PLACE IS THIS? THE STENCH OF MUSTINESS AND DECAY HANGS HEAVY HERE... AS DOES THE AURA OF MADNESS! FOR HERE A MAN LOOKS WITH BLIND EYES AND SMILES HIS SON LOCKED IN THE EMBRACE OF ONE WHO SHOULD BE DEAD... SEES HIS SON LOST TO THE STRANGE CHARMS OF THE GIRL CALLED...

VAMPIRELLA





THE TRUTH JUST
WON'T STAY HIDDEN
FROM A MAN WITH
PSYCHIC VISION...

ADAM, YOU BROUGHT
ME BACK HERE TO NEW
ENGLAND, TO THE UNIVERSITY...
DELIBERATELY LETTING
ME THINK SHE'D BEEN
KILLED?!

DAD, I HAD
TO! UNTIL I COULD
TALK WITH YOU,
MAKE YOU
UNDERSTAND...

ONE ISN'T A
VAMPIRE... NOT AS
WE KNOW THEM!
NOT ONE OF THOSE
FESTERING, EVIL
THINGS VAN
HELDONS HAVE
ALWAYS FOUGHT!



SHE COMES FROM
ANOTHER WORLD!
ONE WHERE THEY
DEPEND ON **BLOOD** AS
WE DO FOOD AND WATER!
SHE COULDN'T HELP
WHAT SHE DID HERE...

AND NOW SHE HAS A
SERUM SHE TAKES DAILY...
A BLOOD SUBSTITUTE!
SHE'S NO LONGER
A THREAT TO
HUMANS, SHE
WANTS TO **AID**
THEM AGAINST THE
FORCES OF CHAOS!

HOW MUCH AID
WOULD SHE BE IF
SHE **MISSSED**
TAKING THIS
SERUM, ADAM?



WOULDN'T SHE BECOME
JUST AS MUCH A BLOOD-LUSTING
MONSTER AS ANY CREATURE WE'VE
HUNTED? AS SHE ALMOST
DID AT WARE'S HOUSE... *
AS SHE WAS WHEN SHE
KILLED YOUR UNCLE?!

... LEAST OF
ALL THAT I THINK
I'VE FALLEN IN LOVE
WITH HER!



I BELIEVE
IN HER, DAD! BUT
OBVIOUSLY NONE
OF MY REASONS FOR
BELIEVING WILL
MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE
TO YOU...



* SEE VAMPIRELLA #12

IN THE COSMOS, MOTION IS CONSTANT. DIFFERENT PLANES OF EXISTENCE, MULTI-VARIOUS DIMENSIONS, SHIFT AND MOVE. AND WHERE THERE IS MOTION, THERE IS FRICTION...

SO TWO WORLDS MAY MEET, TOUCH, AND SOMETIMES FUSE. SO TWO ALIEN AREAS OF REALITY MAY OVERLAP, CONJUGATE, FOR AN INSTANT, AN ETERNITY, A TIME...

AND WITHIN THE NARROW SPHERE OF THIS JOINING, CREATURES FROM ONE MAY REACH OUT TO THOSE OF THE OTHER... SO THAT PLACE CALLED THE NETHER-VOR HAS COME TO EARTH!



DENDORGORGAN WAITS, ONE OF THE SEVEN DEATH SERVANTS OF THE MAP GOD CHAOS, RETURNED BY COSMIC ACCIDENT FROM THE PLACE OF BANISHMENT...



DENDORGORGAN WAITS, FINDING AMUSEMENT IN THE SLAYING OF BREWING CREATURES, REMEMBERING A TIME BEYOND HISTORY WHEN THE EARTH WAS NEARLY WON FOR THE FORCES OF CHAOS...

DENDORGORGAN WAITS. WAITS FOR THE ONE SENT FORTH, THE ONE WHO CAN MOVE BEYOND THIS AREA OF CONFINEMENT. WAITS. AND HUNGERS.

THE LURKER IN THE DEEP!

EVENING ON THE GULF OF MEXICO, MUSIC FROM THE YACHT CLUB OF A TEXAS CITY DRIFTS OUT OVER THE WATER. A MOTOR LAUNCH CHUGS TO A HALT; A PASSENGER CLIMBS TO THE MARINA DOCK...

OH, WOW!
WHO IS
THAT? HE'S
BEAUTIFUL!

MAYBE WE CAN
MEET HIM! THEY SAY HE'S
COLLECTING PEOPLE FOR A
CRUISE... HE NEEDS SOMEONE
HE FINDS INTERESTING OR
AMUSING AND JUST INVITES
THEM! WOULDN'T THAT
BE GROOVY!

THAT'S
JOHNNY TRITON,
THE PLAYBOY! HE
OWNS THAT GREAT
BIG YACHT OUT IN
THE HARBOR!

HE'S RICH,
TOO? I'D SWIMMLES
TO MEET SOMEONE WHO
LOOKED LIKE THAT EVEN
IF HE ONLY OWNED A
ROWBOAT!

WELL, HE CERTAINLY
ISN'T LOOKING OUR WAY!
WHY DOES HE WANT TO GO
TO THE YACHT CLUB,
TONIGHT? THEY STILL
HAVE THAT FUNNY
MAGIC ACT!

MY DAD,
I'VE BEEN
BETTER'N THIS ON
THE TED MACK
SHOW! WHERE IT'S
TIME THIS CLUB
SOT A NEW
ENTERTAINMENT
COMMITTEE!

NOW JUST
YOU WAIT A
MINUTE,
RUPY...

THE
GREAT
PERFORMERS
AND
INTRODUCING:
WHIPPIRELL!



NOW THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT!

RUPY, OL' HOGS, WAIT'LL YOU SEE WHAT SHE DOES!

AND NOW, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, FOR OUR FINALE, MAY I PRESENT MY MEN ASSISTANT...

...THE LOVELY AND MYSTERIOUS...
VAMPIRELLA!

WHAT D'YA SAY, RUPY? SETCHA NEVER SAW ANYTHIN' LIKE THAT ON TEEB RACK!

HELL, I FIGGERD SHE WAS GONNA DANCE! WHY, EVERYBODY KNOWS THEY DO THAT KID-A-STUNT WITH MIRRORS...OR TRAPPOORS...OR GUM THIN'...

MOMENTS LATER, BACKSTAGE...

EXCUSE MY BACK, MY DEAR, BUT I FIND THE SIGHT OF REAL MAGIC BEING PERFORMED MOST UNSETTLING!

A CARRY-OVER FROM MY EXPERIENCE WITH ASHMOPEUS, I SUSPECT.

* VAMPIRELLA #11

YOU'RE AN ANGEL FOR
TAKING ME IN, PENDRAGON! EVEN
THOUGH ARMA VAN HELSING'S
APPARENTLY PERSUADED HIS
FATHER NOT TO PURSUE ME,
BEING A FUGITIVE WAS
GETTING HARDER AND
HARDER...

BUT I OWE YOU MY LIFE,
DEAR CHILD! BEHOLD...YOU VE
DONE WONDERS FOR MY
ACT! NOW, FORGIVE ME WHILE
I DO SOME WONDERS FOR
MY OPENING NIGHT
JITTERS...!

PENDRAGON,
IT'S NOT
OPENING
NIGHT...

A HISSING DETAIL,
MY DEAR...THE WONDERS
PERFORMED ARE IN NO
WAY LESSENED!

UNFORTUNATELY, NEITHER
ARE THE JITTERS! IT'S
PROBABLY THAT DRAM BOOK,
VAMPITELLA... EVEN IN OUR
HANDS, I DON'T LIKE IT!

I'VE VOWED TO
BATTLE THE CULT OF
CHAOS...AND POSSESSING
THE CRIMSON
CHRONICLES IS ESSENTIAL
TO DO THAT!

THERE'S MORE TO IT THAN
SPELLS AND INCANTATIONS...
IT'S A LINK TO THE CULT...
ALMOST SEEMS TO HAVE AN
ALMA THAT ATTRACTS
THOSE WHO WORSHIP CHAOS!

THAT CHARACTERISTIC
GORDON FELL TO
CHEER ME...BUT THEN
WE PENDRAGONS HAVE
NEVER BEEN FAMOUS FOR
OUR COURAGE! OR
ANYTHING ELSE FOR
THAT MATTER!

YOU'LL
SURELY BE
REMEMBERED AS
THE FIRST PERSON
TO HIRE AN
EXTRATERRESTRIAL
AS AN ASSISTANT!

WHICH NO
DOUBT PUTS ME
IN TROUBLE WITH
MAGICIANS
LOCAL AND
ABROAD!

BUT FIRST WE MUST
FACE A MUCH LONGER
ESOTERIC AND FAR
MORE FREQUENT PROBLEM
IN YOUR NEWLY CHOSEN
TRADE, MY DEAR...
UNEMPLOYMENT!

PENDRAGON,
I CAN BE OF
HELP!

I NEED
SHIPBOARD
ENTERTAINMENT
FOR THE CRUISE
I'M PLANNING. THE
NAME IS JOHNNY
TRITON!

AND THE FOLLOWING NIGHT...

ISN'T MIDNIGHT
RAATHER AN ODD HOUR
FOR SAILING, PEMORADON...?
JOHANNY TRITON SEEMS
AS ECCENTRIC AS HE
IS ATTRACTIVE!

FRANKLY, MY
DEAR, I HAVE A
SPECTACULAR DISTRUST
OF SHIPS, NO MATTER
WHEN THEY SAIL...
GODS HAND IN HAND WITH
MY INABILITY TO
SWIM!

HOWEVER,
I FIND THE
MONEY
OFFERED BY MR.
T. AS IMPRESSIVE
AS THE CUT OF
HIS FEATURES!



YOU'D THINK HE'D HIRE A
FEW MORE CREWMEN, ALL
I'VE BEEN SO FAR ARE
PASSENGERS! BUT OUR
TRUNK SEEMS TO HAVE BOTTEN
HERE ALL RIGHT... MY SUPPLY
OF SERUM IS INTACT
AND--

THAT'S
ODD! THERE'S
SALTWATER
PUDDLED ON
IT!

PROBABLY
SPRINK FROM
THE LAUNCH--
NOTICED IT
ON MY THINGS
TOO!



EUREKA! A VERITABLE
BONANZA / WHATEVER THE
SHORTCOMINGS OF HIS MANUALS,
MR. TRITON CERTAINLY KNOWS
HOW TO MAKE A JAPED OLD
TOSPOPER FEEL AT HOME!

SOMEONE'S
AT THE
DOOR...



MR. TRITON...
INVITES YOU TO JOIN
HIM... FOR A LATE
QUACK... IF YOUR
PACKING IS
FINISHED...



THE PURPOSE OF THE
WELL-STOCKED LIQUOR CABINET
BECOMES CLEAR... TO DROWN
THE REMOY OF THE STEWARD'S
VOICE! MOST BRUESOME SOUND
I'VE HEARD SINCE
INNER-SANCTUM WENT
OFF THE AIR AND--WHAT
IS IT, MY DEAR...?

SEA-WEED...

IN THE WINE-DARK OCEAN DEPTHS, PERHAPS AN
GEOUS RESTLESS, EVEN ANXIOUS, FOR THE
RETURN OF THE ONE GENT FORTH-SWIMMING
THINGS NOW AVOID THESE WATERS. THERE IS
ONLY THE STILLNESS, AND THE WAITING. SOON...
SOON...



JUST A GLANCE
WOULD BRING YOU ANY
OF THOSE WOMEN, ALL
EQUALLY LOVELY...
WHY ME IN
PARTICULAR?



SURE, I COULD
HAVE ANY OF THEM
ON THIS SHIP...
PROBABLY IN THE
WORLD! BUT YOU
AND I HAVE ONE
IMPORTANT THING IN
COMMON. MOST OF
THEM WILL
NEVER HAVE...

THE SECOND SUNSET FALLS ON JOHNNY TRITON'S
YACHT IN ITS JOURNEY... VOICES AND LAUGHTER
OF HIS GUESTS CARRY OUT ONTO THE CALM
WATERS...

SO FAR IT'S BEEN
FABULOUS! BUT
YOU'D THINK TRITON
WOULD CRACK DOWN ON
HIS CREW... THEY
BARELY MAKE AN
APPEARANCE ALL
DAY!

I FEAR THERE'S
ONLY ONE THING
OUR HANDSOME HOST
NOTICES--THE
LADY
MAGICIAN!



YOU'RE
BEAUTIFUL,
VAMPIRELLA...
ALL I'VE EVER
WANTED!

I KNEW IT FROM
THE MOMENT YOU FIRST
STEPPED INTO THE
SPOTLIGHT THERE AT
THE YACHT CLUB...

WHY ME,
JOHNNY...?



THE
MARK OF
CHAOS!



OF COURSE!
ARE YOU REALLY
SURPRISED? SURELY YOU
MUST HAVE SENSED
IT ABOUT ME...

WITH AN URGENT MOVEMENT, TRITON TUGS
VAMPRELLA TOWARD HIS CABIN...

...I FELT IT ABOUT YOU,
VAMPRELLA! THE STRANGENESS,
THE APARTNESS, THE
SUPERBILITY THAT SETS YOU
ABOVE ORDINARY PEOPLE!

OF COURSE
I DON'T WANT TO
SAY ANYTHING UNTIL I
HAD PROOF! THEN
ONE OF MY CREWMEN FOUND
THIS AMONG YOUR
THINGS... YOU'RE ONE
OF US DARLING!

...A COMPANION OF CHAOS! JUST
AS I'VE BEEN SINCE THAT DAY YEARS
AGO... THE DAY THE TANKER EXPLODED!
THE TANKER I SERVED UPON AS A LOWLY
SEAMAN...

I SURVIVED... ONLY TO FACE CERTAIN DEATH
FROM THE SUN AND SEA, DRIFTING HOPELESSLY,
DANGEROUSLY... LIKE ALL DYING MEN, I PRAYED...
PRAYED TO A HALF-FORGOTTEN NAME I'D
HEARD FROM SAILORS OLD AND WISE IN LOWS
FEARFULLY FORGOTTEN BY MOST MEN!

AND SOMETHING HEAVED UP OUT OF THE
DEPTH, SOMETHING SWELLING OF SEA AND
SLIME... A MONSTROUS SHADOW BEFORE MY
SUN-BLINDED EYES! FOR A LONG TIME IT
STARED, AS THOUGH STUDYING EVERY PORE,
EVERY FEATURE ABOUT ME...

GREAT
DEMOSGORGAN,
DESTRUCTOR FROM
THE DEPTHS! SAVE
ME... SAVE ME AND I
SHALL SERVE YOU...
SERVE YOU...

DEMOSGORGAN...!
DEMOSGORGAN...!

DEMOSGORGAN
HEARD ME... SAVED ME...
AND GAVE ME EVERYTHING,
VAMPRELLA! A SHIP'S
STOKER WHO'D NEVER HAD
ANYTHING BUT A FACE
WOMEN LIKE...
EVERYTHING!

OF COURSE!
THESE CRUISES!
DEMOSGORGAN HAS NEEDS...
HUNGERS... I'LL FULFILL
THEM. WITH THESE CRUISES!
BUT DON'T WORRY, YOU'LL
BE SAFE WITH ME!
JUST STAY HERE IN THE
CABIN... DON'T GO
OUT ON DECK...

EVERYTHING
BUT SOMEONE
LIKE YOU! AND
NOW I'VE
EVEN GOT
THAT...

BUT WHAT
DID IT COST,
JOHNNY? DEALING
WITH CHAOS THERE'S
ALWAYS A
COST!

PENDRAGON!



BUT VAMPIRELLA'S CRIES DO NOT REACH
THE MAIN DECK...AND IF THEY DID, WOULD
ONLY BE LOST IN THE TERRIBLE
STILLNESS THAT HAS SETTLED THERE!



NOW VAMPIRELLA MOVES WITH REFLEXES
HONED ON A PLANET BEYOND THE STARS WE
KNOW...

...MOVES WITH STRENGTH AND PURPOSE
BREP ON HER DOOMED AND DISTANT HOME
CALLED DRAKULON!



FOR AN INSTANT, THERE IS NO SOUND, NO
MOVEMENT. THEN A STRANGE WAIL, STARTING
LOW AND RISING TO A HAUNTING, HOWLING
PITCH, ECHOES OUT OVER THE OCEAN VASTNESS...
A WAIL FROM THE MONSTROUS THING THAT
IS DEMOGORGAN!

NOW THE SHIP OF JOHNNY TRITON SEEMS TO MELT AND PIE. RUMY CRACKS AND GIVES WAY BEFORE RIVULETS OF RUST AND CORROSION. RAILINGS BUCKLE AND BEND. BULKHEADS BURST FROM THEIR OWN ROTTENNESS, AND THE DEVOURING SEA POURS IN...

AND AS THE GREAT SHIP CRUMPLES, WITHERS AND DRAWS INTO ITSELF, A BALLOON PUNCTURED AND COLLAPSING, SO AT LAST ARE THE FLEETING SLIMPUS CREW FINALLY AND FULLY SEEN...



MAN AND MACHINE RETURNING TO THEIR ORIGINS...



THE SHIP! NOTHING BUT THE RUSTED, ROTTEN-OUT HULK OF... OF AN OLD TANKER...

THE CREW WERE SKELETONS... CORPSES... DROPPED UP FROM THE OCEAN FLOOR...! DEMOGORGAN'S MAGIC!

NOW IT'S ALL BEING TAKEN BACK! EVERYTHING GIVEN ME...! BUT WHY? WHY?! I DID ALL I WAS SUPPOSED TO...!

AND VAMPIRELLA KNOWS TRITON'S STUMBLING WORDS, HIS PLEADING VOICE, ARE DIRECTED NOT TO HER... BUT THE ANSWER THING WHICH NOW SEIZES HIM!

WHY SHOULD ONE GIRL MAKE A DIFFERENCE? WHAT IF I DO WRONG? WHAT DID I DO WRONG?!

AAAAAAA AAAAAAHHHHHHHHH!



IN THE DARK, RUSHING OCEAN WATERS,
THERE IS NO ONE TO ANSWER JOHNNY
TRITON. NO ONE TO SUGGEST WHY ONE
LOST, UNCOMMONLY HANDSOME SAILOR
SHOULD ALONE HAVE RECEIVED SUCH
FAVORS...

NO ONE TO POINT OUT THAT
EVEN RIGHTLY AWESOME PENCOS
ARE STILL EITHER MALE OR
FEMALE...

...AND THAT PENCOSGORGAN
IS A FAITHFUL, BUT EXTREMELY
JEALOUS MISTRESS!

...EXCEPT TWO!

AND IN THE WAKE OF
CHAOS' SERVANT AND
HER ILL-CHOSEN LOVER,
ALL ELSE FOLLOWS...

PENCOSGORGAN!
THIS RAFT...!
WHERE DID
YOU...?

ANY GOOD
MAGICIAN TRIES
TO HAVE AT LEAST
ONE TRICK TO
SUIT THE OCCASION,
MY DEAR...

...AND,
AS YOU MAY
RECALL, I
DISTRUST
RAFTS!

END

THE COMIC BOOKS

By Joe Brancatelli

There is an unsavory truth about the comic-book business that disturbs me as a practicing writer or interested in the success of well-written material, frightens me as a charter member of the quality-sells-itself school, concerns me as a dyed-in-the-dollar capitalist and scares the hell out of me as a comic-book fan.

The unsavory truth is a simple one: Comic books could develop into the most creative medium in the art world and still go the way of *Collier's*, or *Life* or *Look* or any defunct magazine.

Many of the sharper people in the industry have known for years that the key to the survival of the comic book lies not solely in artistic creativity, but in the effective utilization of the nation's notoriously poor distribution network.

Along with just about every other consumer magazine in circulation today, comic books suffer from very poor distribution from publisher to eventual buyer. The labyrinth that is the nation's distribution system has been entering on the brink of total collapse for dozens of years, crumbly unable to bear the brunt of lackadaisical publishers, inefficient national distributors and monopolistic local independents. And while some magazines in the narrow special interest field can survive and occasionally prosper within the creaking system, the high-volume, low-profit nature of the comic-book business is being ripped apart.

In simplest terms, every comic book ever published could be on a par with *Newsday*, but it will never sell because the distribution system has broken down.

Barring a momentous act of the divine god of publishing grace—or a concerted, multi-billion dollar magazine industry drive—we're stuck with the system as it now exists. However, there is an effective and tested way for the comic-book industry to deal with some of the problems and, if nothing

else, stave off a disastrous, short-range collapse of sales.

One remedy for the crumbling system—the one I can could quickly and cheaply be grafted onto the comic world—was stumbled upon years ago by Genevieve Pope, the prosperous and catenning publisher of *The National Enquirer*. Possibly the least credible—but most widely read—weekly periodical in the world, TNE still uses the Pope formula to give it the circulation edge over his two gonipale-come-lately, the schlocky *National Inez* and *Time, Inc.'s* light, airy and superfluous *People*.

Briefly, Pope employs his own 900-person staff of part-time and full-time employees, all with the sole task of making sure that *The National Enquirer* is well represented on the nation's retail periodical racks. While TNE, like every last-selling magazine, is distributed by a major national company which specializes in periodical dissemination, Pope long ago saw the need for in-house employees to service retailers directly.

Best of all, the system works. *The National Enquirer* sells about 5 million copies a week at 30 cents each—an incredible 360 million copies a year. And, according to *Good Housekeeping* editor John Mack Carter, the retail-check system spells the difference between TNE and dozens of other competing weekly gonipale tabloids.

Writing in *Folio*, the magazine of magazine management, the well-respected and powerful Carter said "The importance of this regular policing has been proven in tests of (retail) displays left without checkups. The weekly sale of copies without any checkup falls 40 per cent."

Pope, Carter continued, had a dream of selling 80 per cent of all the copies he prints (most magazines are profitable at the 45 per cent mark, while a 50 per cent sale is considered exceptional). "This is not an impossible dream," Carter concludes,

"as (*National Enquirer*) sales have gone as high as 89 per cent and rarely fall as low as 70 per cent."

To understand the significance of Pope's retail checking system, it is necessary to understand how comic books and other magazines get from the publisher to you. After a magazine is published, it is usually sent directly from the printer to a string of local "independent distributors" who have agreed to distribute the book under contract with a "national distributor." Since most local distributors have a geographic monopoly (developed gradually through the years and presently being centered in the coast system), he not only receives almost all the magazines published, he gets all the comic books published by National, Marvel, Charlton, Gold Key, Harvey, Archie and Warner.

As you might suspect, neither he nor his string of retailers can adequately merchandise all the magazines and all the comics. More often than not, many books get lost in the shuffle, never leave the distributor's warehouse or never make it from the retailer's bundle to his limited display space. Moreover, since comic books offer both independent distributors and retailers an embarrassingly poor profit when compared to more prestigious books like *Time*, *Playboy*, *Esquire*, *Cosmo*, *Playboy* or the others, the four-color chapbooks are most often left behind.

In 1974, when I was on a cross-country assignment for the Gannett newspaper chain, I surveyed 50 independent distributors, and it was their consensus that only about one comic book in four printed actually reaches the retail shelves.

Naturally, even if the comic book is the greatest thing since sliced bread creatively, the distribution malus almost surely guarantees dreadful sales.

Since they are the most severely affected publishers, the nation's com-

ic-book producers would be wise to institute Pope's system for their own protection. Unlike Pope, they wouldn't even have to pay people to do their checking. There are thousands of fans across the country who would gladly volunteer to check newists, if for no other reason than to assure that they themselves can purchase the comic book they want when it is published. Should some farsighted publisher be so generous as to offer his volunteer checkers a bonus in the way of free merchandise, he would assume a valid loyalty and devotion to retail-checking heretofore unknown in business circles.

The advantages are obvious for both the publisher and the fan, as well as the distributor. For the publisher, once aware of which retail outlets are under-supplied, over-supplied or badly supplied, he can act to rectify the situation quickly, improve his sales markedly—and possibly even keep his job when the stockholders ask him what he's done for them lately. For the fan, he has the satisfaction of knowing the comic-book business needs him as well as just his dollars, and he is also assured of a relatively even flow of comic books. And for the distributor (and retailer), they have an opportunity to increase their own flagging profits and have eager-buyer—unpaid—volunteers doing the work they should have done a long time ago.

Heaven forbid, but the damn thing makes sense. No wonder the only comic-book attempt at a similar system (in 1971), National's DC Survey Club, went down in flames due to corporate greed, stupidity and neglect.

If only Genevieve Pope published *Comic Books*.

Joe Brancatelli, a long-time comic-art fan and collector, is an editor and reporter at Fairchild Publications, the nation's largest chain of business newspapers.

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